

The National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP) is a network of established and emerging rural institutions that work together to strengthen rural America. The principal members of the network are State Rural Development Councils in 40 of the 50 states.

Each of the State Councils, which are comprised of active members from a broad range of rural development-related organizations, is served by a full-time executive director. States differ in how they are organized and in the rural issues they decide to address.

This profile is one in a series highlighting the work of the State Councils.

For more information about the National Rural Development Partnership:

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**National Rural
Development
Partnership**

State Profile

Alaska Rural Development Council (ARDC)



The Alaska Rural Development Council (ARDC) was founded in March 1993 to enhance economic development activity statewide, strengthen local economies, stimulate local opportunities, and strengthen local leadership. ARDC's mission is to coordinate and focus public and private resources on the development needs of rural Alaska. Its goal is to support the achievement of a vital economic and social environment for the people of rural Alaska. In fulfilling this mission, ARDC believes it is imperative to recognize and be sensitive to the traditional cultural values and lifestyles of rural Alaskans.

The Council is made up of 12 category groups that represent rural issues in Alaska. It provides a collaborative forum for identifying rural development issues, convenes partnerships to encourage innovative and collaborative approaches to addressing rural development issues, and is a statewide voice for rural issues. ARDC is successful because it spans all the major constituencies that affect rural Alaska. The rural population of Alaska is about 80 percent Alaska native and includes 227 recognized tribes.

All of the Alaska Native Organizations serve the tribal members of Alaska, and most of those are represented in the Council. In achieving its goals, ARDC has worked on a number of projects that showcase its unique ability to positively impact rural areas. Recent projects include the Telemedicine Project and the Private Lands Wildlife Management Partnership.

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ARDC has benefited from the collective wisdom of the following partner organizations:

- ▼ United States Department of Agriculture - Rural Development
- ▼ The Denali Commission
- ▼ Marine Science Foundation
- ▼ State of Alaska, Department of Community and Economic Development
- ▼ Department of Housing and Urban Development
- ▼ United States Air Force
- ▼ National Guard
- ▼ University of Alaska Anchorage
- ▼ University of Alaska Fairbanks
- ▼ Alaska Regional Development Organizations
- ▼ U.S. Forestry
- ▼ Regional Non-Profits
- ▼ Alaska Native Village Corporations
- ▼ The Small Business Development Center
- ▼ Growth Company of Alaska
- ▼ 1st National Bank of Anchorage
- ▼ Co-op Extension Service



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NRDP State Profile

July 2001

Alaska Rural Development Council at Work

ARDC Bridges the Digital Divide

ARDC has been an instrumental advocate for bringing advanced telecommunications and information technology services to rural Alaska. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 has yet to achieve a balance between the needs of rural America for advanced telecommunications with services currently available in urban America. Nowhere is this "digital divide" more pronounced than in rural Alaska. ARDC has partnered with the Applied Science Laboratory of the University of Alaska-Anchorage and the Alaska Telemedicine Project to use telecommunications as a means of providing health care over vast distances. Prior to this, rural communities had to rely on satellite transmissions that require the use of narrow bandwidth telecommunications and information technology. Funded by the National Library of Medicine (NLM), the project has developed, deployed, and evaluated the use of telemedicine for otolaryngology (ENT), dermatology, and emergency medical services to 25 villages in remote western Alaska.

Beginning in 1999, dedicated funding from the Departments of Defense, Transportation, Veterans Affairs, and Indian Health Services has been leveraged to replicate this successful model to all of Alaska's 235 rural villages and communities. The Council understands that whereas equity in shipping and transportation marked the growth or lack of growth for rural states in the 19th and 20th centuries, equity in telecommunications will mark the growth or lack of growth for rural Alaska in the 21st century. Committed to bridging the digital divide in Alaska, ARDC has spearheaded the use of advanced information technologies to ensure that Council business, education, training, and information-sharing proceeds, despite travel distances and meager budgets. For this reason, the Council developed and implemented ARDC net, a fully functioning messaging system that has become its primary business tool.

Private Lands Wildlife Management Partnership

The Alaska Rural Development Council (ARDC) in partnership with Alaska Village Initiatives (AVI) has established the Private Lands Wildlife Management Partnership in hopes of providing rural Alaskans with control of fishing and gaming revenues in their immediate communities. Utilizing native Alaskan beliefs, which value the use of wild game for sustenance, AVI structured this private land management program so that rural Alaskans would be able to capture the fees collected from sports fishermen and hunters, thus directly benefiting their communities.

ARDC's primary role in this partnership is to provide education for the rural Alaskan private landowners. To supply adequate funds for this education process, AVI will underwrite part of ARDC's personnel travel costs when they make presentations. This gesture

will allow the Council to stretch its travel funds and participate in more rural forums at the same time. This partnership was created to revitalize the rural economy and to bring non-government grant type revenues into the communities. With 60 percent of the rural Alaskan economy being driven by federal and state program payments, there was a growing concern that the tightening of these and other types of transfer payments would cause the rural economy to remain somewhat stagnant. Though the Private Lands Wildlife Management Partnership is a fairly new program, it is expected that meaningful progress and quality of life benefits will be measured in about a year.

"Your presence and information provided our communities (with) the knowledge of resources and networking necessary in pursuing support for and completion of essential community projects."

**Dorothy B. Larson,
Community Development
and Grant Specialist
Bristol Bay Native Association**